

REMARKS

Claims 1, 8-10, and 14-22 are pending in the present application. Claims 1, 8-10, and 14-22 have been amended. Claim 1 is the sole independent claim. The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider the outstanding rejections in view of the following remarks.

Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1, 8-10, and 14-21 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,505,347 to Kaneko et al. ("Kaneko") in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,658,661 to Arsenault et al. ("Arsenault"). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Applicants respectfully submit that this rejection is improper at least for the reasons set forth in the Request for Pre-Appeal Brief Conference filed September 4, 2007. However, without admitting the validity of this rejection, Applicants have incorporated various clarifying amendments to the claims. These amendments are merely intended to clarify the claimed subject matter, not to add further limitations to distinguish over Kaneko/Arsenault. Thus, Applicants respectfully reassert the arguments presented in the Request for Pre-Appeal Brief Conference with respect to the above amended claims. In view of such arguments, it is respectfully submitted that independent claim 1 is allowable over Kaneko and Arsenault, and claims 8-10 and 14-22 are allowable at least by virtue of their dependency on claim 1.

Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw this rejection.

Conclusion

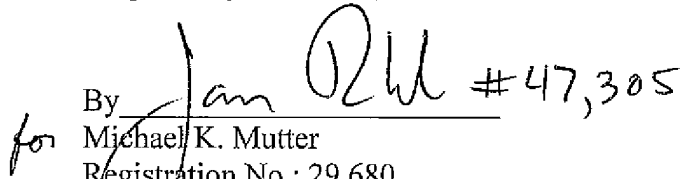
In view of the above remarks, it is believed that the claims clearly distinguish over the patents relied on by the Examiner, either alone or in combination.

Should the Examiner believe that any outstanding matters remain in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact Jason W. Rhodes (Reg. No. 47,305) at the telephone number of the undersigned to discuss the present application in an effort to expedite prosecution.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

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Respectfully submitted,

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